

## BURIAL PREPARATIONS

In the days prior to mortuary services, family and friends had the responsibility for preparing the dead for burial and in the early days of the Heber Third Ward this tradition was also followed. In these former times the Relief Society usually was called upon for help. It was truly a loving and compassionate, and I would imagine, unpleasant task. As soon as a person died, the body had to be cared for immediately for they were not embalmed and if the weather was at all warm, it would deteriorate quickly. Ice packs and cold cloths were applied to the body to preserve it. Coins such as quarters were often placed on the eyes of the deceased to keep them closed. The dead had to be bathed and dressed in clean undergarments and then clothed in the best outer garments that were available. There was sponging, pressing, and mending to be done to make everything as attractive as possible. For Church members who had been through the temple, there were new temple clothes to be made. This was no small task.

Venola Cowley remembers that when her mother, Rhoda Ohlweiler, was in the presidency of the Relief Society, several members who were excellent seamstresses, met in the Ohlweiler dining room to work on burial clothes. She recalls such women as Sophia Elizabeth Hicken, Minnie Crook, Elizabeth Wootton as being there among others. The clean white material was cut out on the dining room table and the treadle sewing machine was set up along with the ironing board and irons, which were heated on top of the coal stove. The women cut, pressed, and sewed at a feverish pace to get the clothes finished in one day.

Rhoda would put a big roast on the stove early in the morning, stir up a delicious dessert (pudding or cake) and the girls in the family would prepare and serve the rest of the meal, cleaning and preparing vegetables, making biscuits or rolls to present a good meal for the busy stitchers. Venola stated that her mother usually made the dessert be-

*Third ward Book*

*Mortician*

cause she could do it faster than she could tell the girls how to do it!

In 1906 John W. Winterrose opened his undertaking business, making many of his caskets as he was cabinet-maker. However, the Relief Society was still called upon to render many services at the time of a death.

